David's Response to Chris Anderson's Proposal

1. It is, first of all, an exciting proposal. It offers the promise of putting Whole Earth permanently on its feet and vastly expanding its reach and influence with messages that the world needs with increasing urgency.

2. I have three specific areas of concern, none of which are deal breakers but all of which relate to the need for establishing a compatible, collaborative relationship going into the agreement.

   A. Chris is suggesting a combined team that would, in practical terms, load the staff overwhelmingly with his players. I'm not suggesting there is anything sinister about this but it does dramatically change the culture and climate of the organization. That's not necessarily a bad thing but it creates the risk that, unless there is a solid foundation of consensus and trust about what the editorial vision and process should be, going in, Whole Earth could become something some of us don't want it to be and don't want to be associated with.

      In any change-over, if you lose the allegiance and institutional memory of a few key people – inside or outside the staff – then you sometimes lose your compass and your bearings.

      So in response to this concern, I would suggest that we convene a meeting at the earliest possible moment with the key players to meet, greet and candidly assess each other. Chris' presence, whatever his busy schedule, would be critical for such a meeting.

   B. The board structure Chris is suggesting has great advantages and potential disadvantages.

      The advantages are obvious: in any relaunch you want tight control and the ability to move fast and light without endless board meetings. The disadvantages are that the driving vision becomes much more singular and lacks both the diversity and the connection to heritage and tradition that provide the core strength of all organizations – both social and biological.

So in response to this concern I would propose that an agreement include the requirement that within six months after launch the board be expanded to a minimum of six people, at least half of whom are chosen by the pre-existing board.

C. Sapling's underwriting of an expansion plan should be predicated on a sound and carefully articulated business plan, with funding tied to specific strategic initiatives. The dollar amount should be tied to some measurable goals and objectives.

So, in response to this concern I would suggest that the outline of a two-year business plan be developed jointly by Chris, David and Danica with an understanding going in what the minimum and maximum financial commitment Sapling can make.

D. Finally, I and the staff are strongly committed to the content we've already outlined for the Fall issue. I would suggest that it makes more sense strategically to preserve the commitment, and the trust and confidence that commitment would inspire in the staff. Devoting the Christmas issue to a them of interconnectedness – or whatever Chris's vision for that theme ultimately is – makes more sense and it could be the showcase example to distribute to TED attendees in February. Presumably, it would contain some content generated from TED 2002.

So, in response to this concern, I would recommend that we keep the existing menu for the Fall issue and open the Christmas issue to reflect Chris's vision. This issue could, and should, be debated and resolved following a meeting of the key players. Again, that meeting should happen ASAP.

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Date: Thu, 14 Mar 2002 09:25:57 -0800
To: David Bolling <david@wholeearthmag.com>
From: Danica Remy <remy@well.com>
Subject: WE : Another way to go...
X-RCPT-TO: <david@wholeearthmag.com>
Status: U

Dear Danica,

Here is the outline of a proposal ... it's simple I think.

1) Whole Earth becomes a combined team of David Bolling, Mike Stone, Jim Daly, Laura Morris, Michael Zivyak and others to be determined to relaunch the magazine effective from the Fall issue.

2) Chris Anderson joins the Point Foundation's board, perhaps as one of no more than three members, with the specific responsibility of overseeing the business strategy of the relaunch of the Whole Earth brand. You remain on the board.

3) Sapling agrees to underwrite funding of an expansion plan for the magazine, out of the profits of TED, committing, say, $500,000 over two years, and the use of the TED conference to promote the relaunch.

4) During a 30-day period after the first issue has been printed, Sapling has the right to withdraw from its commitment to continue funding. In these circumstances, I would come off the Point board.

5) Whole Earth remains owned by the Point Foundation. In the event that it becomes profitable, 50% of all future profits will be donated back to the Sapling Foundation.

Do you agree this is a attractive proposition for Point?

- Chris